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SUBJECT: ANC YOUTH LEADER'S CALL TO ARMS SPARKS PROTESTS IN
SOUTH AFRICA AND RESONATES WITH KEY POLITICAL FIGURES

REF: PRETORIA 1712

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown. Reasons 1.4(b) and
(d).

11. (U) Press reports indicate that recent remarks by ANC Youth League (African National Congress) President Julius Malema are being interpreted by some as a "direct threat to the proper administration of justice and to judicial independence." Malema stated June 16 during a Youth Day rally, "We are prepared to die for Zuma. We are prepared to take up arms and kill for Zuma." In the face of his highly inciting comments, Malema refuses to recall his statements or to apologize.

12. (U) In the following days there was virulent condemnation of Malema's remarks from the South African Human Rights Council, youth political organizations, the political elite and Nobel Prize laureate Bishop Tutu. Zuma himself has since surfaced as the most notable critic of Malema's statement. According to press reports, in a private moment immediately after sharing the stage with Malema as he made the dangerous comments, Zuma questioned Malema about the intent of his remarks. While not apologizing, Malema has somewhat backpedaled, stating that he will no longer use the word "kill" in his speeches.

13. (U) Despite the stir, Malema's violent rhetoric has found resonance among key political constituencies. On June 21 two key leaders in the ANC tripartite alliance proffered support for Malema's comments and echoed his aggressive language. Blade Nzimande, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP), urged the public to "stop blowing Malema's remarks out of proportion" while COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) General Secretary Zwelinzima Vavi, repeated Malema's words. At a funeral service for ANC veteran Pretty Shuping, Vavi told the mourners "Because Jacob Zuma is one of us, and he is one of our leaders, for him, we are prepared to lay down our lives (sic) and to shoot and to kill."

14. (C) BIO NOTE: Julius Malema was appointed ANCYL President on April 6, 2008 by Youth League delegates and later endorsed by the ANC after disputes about whether his election in Manguang Bloemfontein were declared invalid. Many in the ANC still question whether Malema legitimately won the vote, instead believing the ANC rubber stamped former ANCYL President Fikili Mbaula's decision to anoint Malema for his unwavering support to Zuma (reftel). Malema obviously has a long way to come as a leader. A Swedish diplomat who attended the aborted ANCYL conference in April told PolOff on May 23

that she had lunch with Mbaula and Malema during the conference and was shocked by Malema's comments (NFI). She added, however, that Mbaula winced at some of Malema's comments and that it was obvious Mbaula intended to school Malema later about what was and was not appropriate fodder for diplomats.

15. (U) COMMENT: Given Malema's history in the ANC as a youth (reftel) and past meetings with him in which he expressed fierce loyalty to Zuma, it is quite likely that Malema meant what he said. Additionally, in light of the polarization within the ANC following the election of ANC President Zuma in December 2007 supporters have made aggressive statements that have threatened the judiciary, the press and other perceived critics of Zuma. ANC Youth League leaders have been perceived critics of Zuma. ANC Youth League leaders have been criticized for saying there will be violence and "blood on the floor" if Jacob Zuma is convicted in his upcoming corruption trial. South Africa's political culture has a history of violent acts that chills local observers when political actors use this type of rhetoric. In the least such comments risk tarnishing South Africa's international reputation and gives fodder to ANC detractors.
TEITELBAUM